THE LEARNING COMMUNITY AND HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

By

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the factors in the learning community that reportedly contributed to the help-seeking behavior of children, specifically the relationship between juvenile crime victimization and help-seeking behavior. Students were interviewed using a questionnaire, which assessed their victimization history, their experience with help-seeking behavior from these events, the environmental characteristics surrounding the event, and the presence or absence of social support. A Chi-Square analyses were conducted on all the variables. The study concluded that the major factors decreasing help-seeking behavior were a lack of confidence in the teachers' willingness to help and a lack of positive peer relationships.

Keywords: Juveniles, Crime Victimization, Crime Reporting, Help-Seeking Behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades there has been a body of research dedicated to the study of juvenile victimization or bullying as it sometimes called. A Scandinavian researcher initiated the earliest studies in this area in response to a rash of teen suicides in the early 1980's (Carney, 2000; Rigby & Slee, 1991). Currently, there has been a growing interest in the dynamics of victimization due to a series of school shootings. Society is demanding answers to why incidents like Columbine, Paducah, and Littleton occurred and what can be accomplished to avoid such violence. Many American researchers are working to provide solutions to these questions and find it difficult to offer prevention in the face of societal acceptance of bullying as a "character-building" experience. Many people believe that bullying is a common part of life to be endured (Weinhold, 2000; Atkin,Smith, Roberto, Fediuk, & Wagner, 2002; Bullock, 2002); however, intimidation, threats, and abuse can have lasting, detrimental effects on the lives of persons involved (Cowie, 1998; Carney, 2000). Scandinavian researcher, Dan Olweus, began the international movement to consider childhood victimization, not as a rite of passage but as malevolent violence in its earliest form (Dennis & Satcher, 1999).

Bullying is a growing problem in our society that plagues most people at one time or another (Boulton, Bucci, & Hawker, 1999; Boulton, Trueman, & Flemington, 2002; Carney, 2000) and is at its peak during childhood (McConville & Cornell, 2003; Rigby & Slee, 1991). Children spend a large portion of their time in the school or learning community; thus, the school environment is a location of particular concern. Bullying quite often evokes fear in victims and bystanders making the educational atmosphere uncomfortable (Dennis & Satcher, 1999). The effects of bullying are not limited to the school (Rigby & Slee, 1991; Dennis & Satcher, 1999) and may carry over into broader difficulties in the social and emotional life of both the bully and the victim (Boulton, et al., 2002; Dennis & Satcher, 1999; Carney, 2000). These negative outcomes are the motivations for a growing body of research dedicated to prevention and intervention (e.g. Cowie, 1998; Casey- Cannon, Howard, & Gowen, 2001). Most of the aforementioned researchers agree that bullying must be curbed, and a large portion of the research is focused on overt physical aggression while verbal/emotional or relational bullying is not mentioned (Boulton, et al., 2002; Dennis & Satcher, 1999; Crick, 1996). This limited focus may be due to society's difficulty in recognizing emotional and social/relational aggressions as bullying (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). As a result some very damaging bullying is condoned and accepted (Oliver & Hoover, 1994).

In recent years some research has been dedicated to

examining factors related to reporting the occurrence of both school and community violence (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001; Rennison, 2007; Watkins, 2005). Children use many indicators such as the emotions evoked as a result of being victimized (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004), the effectiveness of the strategies used to defend themselves (Craig, Pepler & Blais, 2007; Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001; Camodeca & Goossens, 2005), and prior experiences with disclosures (Williams & Cornell, 2006; Oliver & Candappa, 2007) in contemplating whether or not to report their victimizations (Wescott & Davies, 1995; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). The present study sought to further examine factors affecting childhood victimization and help-seeking behavior by assessing a number of variables including perpetrators and victims' age and gender, victimization location, severity of the victimization, presence or absence of support for the victim, and the types of bullying experienced.

Disclosure Choice

Without witnesses who are willing to report the incidents of victimization, disclosure falls to the victims. Research varies as to the conditions leading to disclosure. Wescott and Davies (1995) examined to whom children chose to disclose their bully victimizations and their reasons for doing so. Most children demonstrated willingness to report, with only 20% of bullying victims choosing not to disclose to anyone. The children who reported their victimizations elected to disclose to their same sex friend or parent. They made their choice based on perceived characteristics of the person to whom they chose to disclose; such characteristics included the confidant's willingness to help, the confidant's history of being victimized by a bully, and the confidant's ability to comfort the victim.

Williams and Cornell (2006) studied the effects that a bully's threat of violence has on the victim's help-seeking behavior. A little over half of the students (53%) stated that they were willing to report their harassment to a teacher, but another 30% indicated that they did not believe there was a school staff member in whom they could confide. Approximately half of the sample stated that they did not believe that their teachers cared about their well-being. Age was another factor affecting help-seeking behavior, with younger students being more willing to seek assistance than students in higher grades, a phenomenon also discovered by Unnever and Cornell (2004), Frisen, Holmqvist, and Oscarsson (2008), and Oliver and Candappa (2007). The type of bullying was also examined, and there was no difference in reporting physical, emotional, or relational bullying, a finding shared by Unnever and Cornell (2004). Additionally, no gender differences were found.

Unnever and Cornell (2004) investigated which student characteristics contributed to students' willingness to report their victimizations. They discovered that students who were unremittingly bullied were more likely to report than a student who was seldom or intermittently bullied. Students who believed that their school had a no-tolerance policy against bullying were more likely to report their victimizations. Gender effects were found in this research with girls more likely to disclose their victimizations than boys. When boys did report their victimizations, it was to an adult while girls were more likely to disclose to a friend.

Oliver and Candappa (2007) researched the bully victim's thought processes when contemplating whether or not to report. They found students generally were hesitant to report to adults for fear of the potential repercussions such as social ostracism and physical violence from the bully. The majority of students reported feeling more comfortable confiding in a friend first and parents second. Some students reported that their reluctance to tell a parent was related to their beliefs that their parents would tell school authorities and make the situation worse.

Frisen et al., (2008) examined teens' conceptualization of bullying. They found age differences in students' definitions of bullying with younger students reporting any harmful behavior by a peer as bullying, whereas older students considered the existence of a power differential between bully and victim as a necessary element for bullying. They, too, found gender differences in students' definitions of bullying with girls being more likely to consider subjective feelings of the victims as the most important consideration. Most often, the determining factor for boys was whether or not a power inequity was present. When asked to ascribe responsibility for bully victimization, teens varied their reports

from one time to another. Most of the teens indicated at one time that the victim's appearance was the bully's reason for the victimization, yet later, they assigned responsibility to the perpetrator.

Houndoumadi and Pateraki (2001) found that victims overwhelmingly reported that bullying was unacceptable and that they did not want to befriend bullies. This sentiment was shared by only half of the bullies who were interviewed; one-third of the bullies reported that there were justifiable reasons why certain students were bullied. The researchers found no effect for age and attitudes toward bullying; however, they discovered that girls reported being more saddened about bullying and could not comprehend why other students bullied or were friends of bullies. Generally, students reported that their teachers were oblivious to the extent of bullying within their schools. This belief was reinforced by the lack of communications between bully victims and teachers, thereby, creating a preference among students to report their victimizations to their parents as opposed to teachers.

Emotional Effects

Several studies have reported the emotional effect that bullying has on its victims and bystanders; however, research on how these emotions affect students' decisions to report their victimizations is a relatively new area of study. Hunter and Borg (2006) discovered that victims who felt anger as a result of their victimization were more likely to seek revenge against their attackers and were more likely to enlist the help of a friend to assist them in their goals. Victims who reported feeling helpless were more likely to do nothing. Those who felt indifferent about their victimization sought assistance from specific individuals (i.e., a friend or teacher) but not from their group of friends or parents. Chronically bullied students were more likely to seek help from their teachers and parents.

Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) examined how bullied students' emotions affected their coping responses. Victimized children were found to exhibit intense negative emotions including anger, fear, and embarrassment. Angry students were more likely to use coping strategies that were ineffective, failing to reduce future victimization (i.e., revenge seeking). Children who reported feeling afraid or embarrassed by their victimizations were more likely to seek help. Those who sought help were more likely to attempt to resolve the conflict by trying to get along with their victimizer(s). In general, students who were active in their attempt to resolve the conflict either on their own or seeking advice from others had fewer internalizing symptoms. Cognitive distancing, ignoring the situation, or pretending that it didn't happen, as a coping mechanism, was shown to be maladaptive. There was an effect for gender with girls reporting greater emotional distress than boys. Grade effects were also discovered with older children reporting more negative emotions than their younger counterparts.

Hunter, et al. (2004) explored the relationship between gender and the utility of social support systems when disclosing victimizations. Girls who experienced negative emotion during their victimization and who perceived their bullying as a challenge were more willing to use social support as a resource. Additionally, these girls reported that they chose to disclose to their support system believing that they would receive assistance to end their victimization. They further reported that disclosing had a cathartic effect.

Newman and Murray (2005) investigated student and teacher perception of when help-seeking was appropriate. They discovered that both teachers and students believed that help-seeking was appropriate when there was a threat of, or the actual occurrence of, physical harm or when profanity was used by the bully. Spilsbury (2002) noted that, in victimization, harm was the chief reason for seeking assistance.

Newman and Murray (2005) also noted that students interviewed expressed a concern about disclosing to teachers, fearing that if the situation was not handled properly by the teacher that the bully situation would worsen. Other students stated that they were afraid that certain teachers would not help them at all. Of particular importance to these students was confidentiality when disclosing to their teachers. Students' perceptions of what was serious in a bully situation varied depending on their social status. Unpopular students most often reported that teasing was just as serious an offense as threats of physical aggression, a belief not shared by popular students or teachers. Popular students endorsed help-seeking as a

coping response in order to end their victimization. Unpopular students were motivated by fear, stating that they would not seek help because they were afraid that the bullies would seek revenge against them.

Newman, et al. (2001) examined the reasons that influenced students' decision to seek help. Most students reported that they preferred to handle the bully situations on their own; however, in the event that they were unsuccessful at their attempt, they would seek help from others. There was an effect for gender with girls more willing to seek help from their teachers than boys. High self-perception was related to increased utilization of help-seeking as a strategy for boys but decreased utilization for girls. Boys with higher self-perceptions were also more likely to seek revenge and be more aggressive, an effect not found for girls. Students who reported lower self-perceptions often reported being passive was their strategy for handling their victimization. Students also reported being passive when they were victimized by someone with whom they wanted to have or maintain a friendship.

Hunter and Boyle (2004) found that, generally, students chose from four coping strategies: wishful thinking, social support, problem focused, and avoidance. Like many of the aforementioned studies, girls reported using social support as a coping strategy more often than boys. Students who were frequently victimized chose social support as a strategy less often than students who were bullied less. Chronically bullied students chose wishful thinking and avoidance more often as coping strategies. While bullying is most often considered as a negative experience, some participants reported to the researchers that the outcome of a bully situation aided in psychological growth by giving them the opportunity to develop new coping strategies.

Conclusions of Previous Research

The previous findings raised several questions. Does the location of the victimization affect help-seeking behavior? Does the type of victimization affect help-seeking behavior? Does previous attempts at help-seeking influence subsequent help-seeking behavior? When in quest of help, from whom are students most likely to seek it? Does student perception of the environmental safety affect reporting behavior? Such questions generated the following hypotheses.

The study sought to probe factors that contribute to the relationship between juvenile crime victimization and help-seeking behavior. Finkelhor and Ormrod (2001) found that juveniles are more often victimized by other juveniles. When these victims seek help they disclose to school authorities most often. Finkelhor and Ormrod asserted that juveniles disclosed to school authorities because they spend the majority of their day at school. While this is a rational assertion, there was no scientific evidence offered for their assertion; therefore, this study sought to address this limitation. The first hypothesis, then, was that juveniles who perceived the school environment as safe were more likely to report their victimizations to school authorities. Additionally, a second hypothesis was that student/ teacher relationships are important not only for the education of students but also for their safety as well. Therefore, students who did not perceive their teacher as supportive were hypothesized to report their victimization to adults at lower rates. Other supportive relationships, such as those with peers, also affect the victim. Thus, the third hypothesis was that students reporting positive peer relationships would seek the advice of friends for solutions to problems.

There is dissonance in the literature regarding the role of fear in a juvenile's willingness to disclose. Newman & Murrray (2005) and Kanetsuna & Smith (2002) both found that when juveniles report higher levels of fear they are more likely not to report their victimizations, whereas Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) found the opposite effect with fearful juveniles more likely to seek help. The present study attempted to quell this dissonance by examining the relationship between student fear and coping response. The fourth hypothesis was that juveniles reporting higher levels of fear were more likely to report their victimizations.

To reiterate the hypotheses

- Students who perceive the school environment as safe are more likely to report victimization.
- Students who do not perceive teachers as supportive are less likely to report victimization.
- Students with positive peer relations seek advice from peer friends.

- Students with higher levels of fear are more likely to report victimization.

Methodology

Sample and Data

Data from the 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS): School Crime Supplement (SCS) were analyzed. The NCVS is a national poll conducted by the Bureau of Census. The NCVS dataset consists of information about crime victimizations and crime reporting behavior. It also consists of information about the specifics of crimes such as victim and offender demographics, incident location, type of crime, use of weapons, and injuries sustained.

The NCVS: SCS is administered bi-annually. The participants are interviewed every six months for three years and are asked about crime victimizations that have occurred since the last interview. The initial interview is face to face at clients' homes, and the following interviews are by telephone. The present study examined the SCS specifically. The dataset sample consists of youth between the age 12 and 18 years. Participants were required to have been enrolled in school during the six months prior to the interview. A total of 7,112 student victims completed the interviews.

Methodological questions concerning the use of the NCVS dataset emerged. Most of the concerns centered on the self-report nature of the survey, the inability to verify crime victimizations, and questions about the representativeness of the sample. While these problems certainly exist, there are many benefits that make the use of the dataset worthwhile. The dataset is particularly large with a total of 7,112 participants. A large sample size provides increased statistical power and allows the researcher to make more reliable predictions. Additionally, the sample of juveniles was obtained from households randomly selected by the US Census Bureau. Random sampling increases the likelihood that the study results can be generalized. While the use of this dataset is a limitation, the information it can provide is a benefit that should not be neglected.

Variables

This study was chiefly concerned with what factors are related to help-seeking behavior. Researchers have found several factors to be associated with juvenile help-seeking behavior, such as victim characteristics, offender characteristics, perception of school safety, victimization location, type of crime, number of times victimized, perception of support, and coping mechanisms.

In the NCVS there were questions that asked the student about the types of crimes experienced, the outcomes of these crimes, and whether or not they chose to report these crimes. The types of crime investigated were bullying, theft, verbal abuse, property damage, threats of harm, and assault (with and without a weapon). Incident specific variables examined included victim characteristics (age, gender, and race), perpetrator characteristics (age, gender, relationship to the victim, and race), and incident location (school or community). Injuries sustained as a result of the crime, whether weapons were used in the commission of the crime and the value of stolen/ damaged property were also examined. Factors specifically related to reporting behavior such as coping strategies (specifically avoidance behavior), perception of school safety and perception of social support (adult and peer) were examined as well.

Results and Discussion

The respondents were categorized into five groups according to reported victimization:

- Physical Bullying (students who had been pushed, shoved, or tripped);
- Property Stolen (students who had their property stolen by a peer);
- Verbal Bullying (students who had been made fun of or called names);
- Rumors (students who had rumors spread about them by peers); and
- Threatened by Peers (students who had been verbally threatened by a peer.

This allowed 6,317 of the 7,112 students to be categorized (89%), and the remaining students were removed due to missing data. Overall, 10% (n=631) of the students in the sample were physically bullied, 3% (n=190) had their property stolen by a peer, 19% (n=1200) had been verbally bullied, 15% (n=948) had rumors spread about them, 5%

(n=316) had been threatened by a peer, and the remaining 48% (n=3032) in the general victimization category.

Data were analyzed using Chi Square testing with alpha set at .05. The more liberal alpha was used, even though a number of statistical analyses were performed, due to the exploratory nature of the study.

Prevalence

Prevalence rates of bullying, restricted to age, grade, and gender are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3, respectively. More students between the ages of 12-14 years reported experiencing bullying than the other age groups. Students within these age groups comprised 47% (n=2969) of the total sample, and 63% (n=1870) of them reported being physically bullied, having property stolen, being verbally bullied, having rumors spread, or being threatened.

There were significant differences between age and type of bullying with the younger participants having higher incidents of abuse than their older mates, except for the Property Stolen and the Threatened by Peers categories (physical bullying, $\chi^2(6, N = 586) = 119.43$, $p = .000$; property stolen, $\chi^2(6, N = 206) = 12.32$, $p = .055$; verbal bullying, $\chi^2(6, N = 1,220) = 84.47$, $p = .000$; rumors spread, $\chi^2(6, N = 948) = 21.11$, $p = .002$; threatened, $\chi^2(6, N = 316) = 6.87$, $p = .333$) (Table 2).

	Age						
Type of Bullying	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Physical Bullying	23	26	20	14	9	7	3
Property Stolen	14	24	19	15	10	10	6
Verbal Bullying	18	22	18	15	13	10	4
Rumors Spread	15	21	17	17	13	12	5
Threatened	15	20	17	19	14	10	5

Table1. Prevalence Percentages of Bullying by Age

Type of Bullying	Jr. High School (Grades 6, 7, & 8)	High School (Grades 9, 10, 11 &12)	$x^2(1, N=6317)$	*p*
Physical Bullying	13.1	5.8	100.02	.000
Property Stolen	3.9	2.6	8.28	.004
Verbal Bullying	23.7	15.3	70.28	.000
Rumors Spread	16.6	13.4	12.55	.000
Threatened	5.4	4.6	2.11	.146

Table 2. Prevalence Percentages of Bullying by Level of School

	Sex	
Type of Bullying	Male	Female
Physical Bullying	60	40
Property Stolen	52	48
Verbal Bullying	49	51
Rumors Spread	37	63
Threatened	53	47

Table 3. Prevalence Percentages of Bullying by Sex

An examination of gender differences indicated that males and female reported being victimized at about the same rate; however there were differences between the types of bullying and gender (Table 3). Of the total victimized sample, 25% of the males and 27% of females reported experiencing the specific types of bullying examined in this research.

There were significant differences between sex and two of the types of bullying examined; males reported higher rates of physical bullying, $\chi^2(1, N = 6,279) = 24.87$, $p = .000$; and females reporting higher rates of spreading rumors, $\chi^2(1, N = 6,279) = 82$, $p = .000$. Males and females equally endorsed experiencing the other types of bullying studied (property stolen, $\chi^2(1, N = 6,279) = .343$, $p = .558$; verbal bullying, $\chi^2(1, N = 6, 279) = .515$, $p = .499$; threatened, $\chi^2(1, N = 6, 279) = 1$, $p = .282$).

Prevalence rates were similar to previous studies on bullying. Bullying is most common in middle school students between the ages of 12-14 years. As students get older, reported bully victimization rates decrease, a finding similar to that in Frisen, Holmqvist, and Oscarsson (2008). This study also supported the general research on gender differences in bullying, finding that males report more often experiencing physical bullying and females reporting more spreading rumors (i.e., Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006; Dempsey, Fireman, & Wang, 2006).

Environmental Issues

Looking at school safety measures and specific types of bullying, only three of school safety measures examined had a significant impact. Physically Bullied (34%), $\chi^2(1, N = 6,204) = 6.86$, $p = .009$, and Verbally Bullied (33%), $\chi^2(1, N = 6,204) = 11.31$, $p = .001$), students reported that they did not have security guards at school. Having locked doors in the school had a significant impact. Physically Bullied (45%), $\chi^2(1, N = 5,922) = 7.40$, $p = .007$, and Rumors Spread (46%), $\chi^2(1, N = 5.922) = 18.66$, $p = .000$, students indicated that they did not have locked doors at their schools. Schools requiring their students and staff to

wear badges had an impact on two types of bullying. Students who were Verbally Bullied (79%), $\chi^2(1, N = 6,267) = 14.31$, $p = .001$, and had Rumors Spread about them (79%), $\chi^2(1, N = 6,267) = 11.14$, $p = .004$, indicated that wearing badges was not required at their schools.

An examination of victimization location variable provided four locations, in the school building, outside on school grounds, on the school bus, and in the community. A majority of the victimized sample reported that they were victimized in school, and therefore, no significant differences were found between groups ($\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 1.76$, $p = .412$). Only two categories had a significant impact on the types of victimization examined, outside on school grounds and on the school bus. There was a relationship between being victimized outside on school grounds and Physical Bullying (35%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,955) = 18.45$, $p = .000$; Verbal Bullying (31%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 6.45$, $p = .040$; Spread Rumors (31%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 16.73$, $p = .000$, and Threatened (38%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 38.80$, $p = .000$. Thus, a number of students indicated they were bullied outside on school grounds. Students indicated a relationship between being victimized on the school bus and Physical Bullying (11%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,798) = 10.83$, $p = .004$; Property Stolen (11%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 35.01$, $p = .000$; Verbal Bullying (10%), $\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 18.45$, $p = .000$; and Spread Rumors (10%),$\chi^2(2, N = 1,799) = 14.57$, $p = .001$.

These findings are a bit equivocal. While the results indicated that some victimized students reported their schools had safety measures in place, there was no clear evidence that the safety measures were effective. Locked doors, security guards, visitor sign-in, wearing badges, and security cameras did not eliminate bullying. A large majority of victimized students reported their schools did have some safety measures in place. This finding suggests that the school safety measures currently being used are not effective in curbing peer victimization within the school.

The location of victimization, in the school building, on the school grounds, on the school bus, or in the community, was also examined. The students in this survey reported that they were most often victimized in the school building followed by on school grounds, and on the school bus. Victimization in the community was least often reported.

Support System

Students' willingness to report their victimizations to adults and teachers is listed in Table 4. More students reported their victimization to an authority figure than did not. Nevertheless, students generally reported a negative perception of the available support from adults in their lives. Many students reported that teachers did not treat students with respect: Physically Bullied (84%), ($\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 36.63$, $p = .000$; Verbal Bullying (73%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 40.72$, $p = .000$; Spread Rumors (72%) $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 103.26$, $p = .000$; and Threatened (89%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 50.56$, $p = .000$. Students also reported that they did not believe teachers cared about students (Physical Bullying 85%, $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 14.68$, $p = .005$; Verbal Bullying 69%, $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 31.77$, $p = .000$; Rumors Spread (71%) $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 69.27$, $p = .000$, and Threatened (87%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 50.39$, $p = .000$. Approximately one-third of the students in all categories reported that they believed that teachers make students feel bad (Physical Bullying $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 33.10$, $p = .000$; Verbal Bullying $(4, N = 6,317) = 54.44$, $p = .000$; Rumors Spread $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 76.62$, $p = .000$, and Threatened $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 57.39$, $p = .000$). A significant proportion of students reported that they did not feel that there was an adult at school who cared about them: Physically Bullied (89%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 10.75$, $p = .030$; Verbally Bullied (76%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 16.75$, $p = .002$; Spread Rumors (82%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 33.78$, $p = .000$; and Threatened (91%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 20.87$, $p = .000$. These same students stated that they did not believe there was an adult at their school that would help them (Physical Bullying 88%, $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 13.62$, $p = .009$; Verbal Bullying 77%, $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 9.15$, $p = .058$; Rumors Spread 83%, $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 16.23$, $p = .003$; and Threatened 92%, $\chi^2(4, N =$

	Response	
Type of Bullying	Yes	No
Physical Bullying	45	50
Property Stolen	44	45
Verbal Bullying	36	60
Rumors Spread	38	57
Threatened	48	43

Table 4. Percentages of Reporting Behavior to Adults and Teachers

6,317) = 14.62, p = .006.

Overall, students reported having a more positive perception of the support they receive from peers. However, a significant proportion of students' indicated a lack of trust in peers as well as adults. Victimized students, who did not believe they had a supportive friend with whom to talk, included Physically Bullied (83%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 28.78$, p = .000; Verbally Bullied (65%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 60.94$, p = .000; Rumors Spread (78%), $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 32.48$, p = .000; and Threatened (90%) to, and $\chi^2(4, N = 6,317) = 30.01$, p = .000.

Having a support system, thus, has been shown to be helpful to victimized students, but bullied students are often ostracized by their peers and may not have peer support. Additionally, the student/teacher relationship is an important resource for social support within the school as well. The majority of bullied students reported that they did not have a positive perception of the adults within the school. Students in all five of the studied categories overwhelmingly agreed that teachers generally made students feel bad and failed to be of help to them with their problems. This was reflected in over 50 percent of students reporting that they did not report their victimizations to teachers or adults. Williams and Cornell (2006), and Oliver and Candnappa (2007) had similar findings, reporting that middle school students were reluctant to report their victimization to adults. Victimized students often report a more positive relationship with peers. Students indicated that they had friends at school that they could talk to and those friends were willing to help them with their problems. Hunter and Boyle (2004) found that generally when victimized students sought social support they did so for catharsis and did not seek to change their bully situation. A significant proportion of students indicated that they did not have a supportive peer network, but not much is known about this particular group. Studies have indicated that chronically bullied students are often victimized not only by bullies but also by other bully victims. Bully victims also reported that they did not believe that bystanders, those not involved in bullying, would do anything to help them. Smith, Twemlow, and Hoover (1999) found that bystanders often encouraged the bully and warned them when school authorities were nearby. Therefore, in addition to being socially ostracized, these students did not perceive their peers to be supportive or willing to help them change the bully situation.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study used a national dataset, which allowed the opportunity to test effects of several demographic characteristics on variables and increase the generalizability of findings. The disadvantage of using this dataset was the inability to directly administer the questionnaires to the participants. Thus, researchers were unable to control for consistency in the administration of the instruments and interpretation of the participants' statements. Another limitation is that this survey assesses only for violence occurring in the six months previous to the interview. This omits an important factor, previous victimizations, which could impact current responses. While this data has been a useful tool by providing a great amount of information, it is likely that multiple past victimizations affect responses to general questions about recent victimizations. Additionally, the questionnaire was self-report. Participants used their judgment to determine whether they believed they had been crime victims. It is likely that some of the participants were unwilling to admit they had been victimized, and as a result, their victimization history may not be accurate.

Conclusion

Altogether, the results of this study indicate that there is a great need for a peer violence intervention or prevention program in schools. The school safety measures currently in place have little impact on bullying within the school building and students do not believe that they have the support and respect of their teachers. Although students report some positive peer support, this support has little impact on reducing victimization overall. Several anti-bullying programs exist; however, many focus on teacher and peer involvement to lend support to bully victims (i.e., James, Courtney, Flynn, Henry, & Murphy , 2008, Minton & Moore, 2008). Students in this study were not willing to disclose their victimization to teachers, thereby making teacher support interventions undesirable for this group. Participants also acknowledged positive peer relationships

whose effect on their victimization was minimal. Ultimately while peer interventions may be desirable, they will likely be ineffective in eliminating peer victimizations on a global level. A successful intervention might include teacher/ staff and peers that are nominated by students as being trustworthy and helpful. It might include active monitoring of places that students endorse as being areas where they are often victimized, such as hallways, stairways, and cafeterias. There can be little doubt that the problem addressed here in terms of children at school, and which can be seen in adults in the workplace as well, needs to be addressed with urgency.

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